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ABSTRACT

The Delta Adult Literacy Council, Inc. (DALC) is a volunteer, nonprofit organization that seeks to recruit, assess, train, match, and support volunteer tutors and adult new readers. Its accomplishments, its history as a literacy organization, and its tutor training process are described. The process of student recruitment and support involves student referrals from other literacy-providing organizations, hotlines, other students, and various social service agencies, an intake interview, an initial assessment of the learner's literacy strengths, weaknesses, goals, and interests, and an initial tutoring session. After tutoring sessions begin, students, as well as tutors, are provided with continued support. DALC collaborates with other literacy service providers and agencies, is a member of the State Advisory Council on Literacy and Adult Education, and interacts with public libraries. Factors essential for effective programs are discussed: a coordinated delivery system; political advocacy and support; central recruitment; assessment and support; integration of literacy training and human services; and increased funding. Three appendices provide statistics on literacy needs in Washington DC, quality indicators for adult education programs, and national education goals. (Contains 10 references.) (MAS)

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Public Libraries and Community-Based Education:
Making the Connection for Life Long Learning
- A Conference -

ADULT LITERACY AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

ESSENTIAL ISSUES

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ADULT LITERACY AND LIFELONG LEARNING: ESSENTIAL ISSUES

Adult Lifelong Learning Programs Provided by DALC

The Delta Adult Literacy Council, Inc., is a volunteer, nonprofit organization affiliated with the Washington, D.C. Alumnae Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Metropolitan Baptist Church, and the Nation's oldest literacy organization, Laubach Literacy Action, a United States program of Laubach Literacy International. The Council, established in 1987, seeks to recruit, assess, train, support, and match volunteer tutors and adult new readers. They thus acquire basic level skills in reading, writing, listening, speaking, and mathematics which they need in order to participate fully in society. The Council's aim is to raise a level of awareness of literacy needs in Washington, D.C., and to work cooperatively with other literacy projects in Washington, D.C.

Since 1987, the Council has trained over 300 volunteer tutors who have contributed more than 20,000 hours of volunteer time. These volunteers have tutored more than 250 new readers from all sections of Washington, D.C. These adult learners have ranged from 18 to 80 years of age and have consisted of 116 males and 134 females in addition to teenage mothers who were taught to read to their young children for the first time. Among other achievements, they have learned to:

- ride public transportation
- read a book
- read the newspaper
- read prescription bottles

- read the driver's education manual
- read and fill out application forms
- read about the health hazards of smoking and stop
- read well enough to take the tutor-training class and tutor
- read well enough to apply for a higher level job
- read well enough to enroll in General Education Development (GED) and job training programs and be successful.

The Council has demonstrated effectiveness in implementing its programs by conducting 14 tutor-training classes, recruiting, assessing and supporting adult new readers and matching and rematching 250 tutor/student pairs.

Tutor-training

In 1986 Delta Sigma Theta Sorority joined Project Literacy U.S. (PLUS), a major national media outreach project, to assist in combating illiteracy in the United States. PLUS was a public service media campaign undertaken by the American Broadcasting Companies, Inc., and the Public Broadcasting Service. PLUS operated in two phases: outreach development and awareness-raising through media public service announcements.

The initial involvement of the Washington, D.C. Alumnae Chapter was to establish a Literacy Center at the Metropolitan Baptist Church. The Chapter then conducted an awareness workshop, providing participants the opportunity to become aware of various instructional programs used to teach adults. Following these phases, two training programs were planned for volunteer tutors. The Chapter contacted Laubach Literacy Action (LLA), the Nation's

oldest adult literacy organization, in Syracuse, New York, for the purpose of locating a trainer. The closest certified Laubach trainer was imported from West Virginia to train an initial core of 26 volunteers. Since that time Delta's adult literacy program has become an independent Laubach council. By taking the training courses offered at local and national conferences, the Council has a supervisory tutor-trainer who has become an area-wide supervisor to supervisory tutor-trainers, a tutor-trainer and two apprentice tutor-trainers soon to become full-fledged trainers.

To become a Laubach-certified trainer, a participant must enroll in a 12 to 15-hour workshop, tutor a student for at least 40 hours, and take an additional workshop to learn to become a tutor-trainer. The average training spans a period of two to three years while the apprentice tutor practices each segment of the training module under the experienced eye of the supervisory tutor-trainer. Evaluations and instructional techniques are incorporated throughout the tutor-training period. The apprenticeship is essentially the same for supervisory trainers in order to ensure an effective training team.

The training workshops may take place over two to three weekends or may be conducted in three-hour segments once a week for five weeks. Some councils find that interspersing Saturdays and weekday evenings is more convenient.

The training materials are provided by LLA, which constantly seeks to update and redesign its curriculum. Just recently, the Laubach Training by Design materials have been updated. The new

curriculum helps trainers to assess local needs and plan, conduct, and evaluate training. Training by Design guides also include general tips for conducting effective training. Further, the program guides include proposed presentations and alternative activities.

Delta Adult Literacy Council (DALC) is also fortunate to have a reading specialist and an urban education specialist among its trainers. As a consequence, DALC has been able to offer more varied instructional techniques.

Recruitment and Support of Students

The target population of adult new readers who are recruited by DALC is reading at a 0 to 8th grade level. Students assessed beyond that level are referred to GED or other higher level programs.

Initially, students were referred to the Council from other existing literacy-providing organizations. More recently, students have been referred from national and city-wide literacy hotlines, from other students, and from various social service agencies.

Once a referral is made to the Council, the name and telephone number of the potential student are obtained, and the student is contacted to schedule an interview. The student is assured of confidentiality, and every effort is made to ease any anxiety during the first telephone contact.

The intake interview usually lasts for approximately 30 minutes. The student is greeted with a warm handshake and encouraged to sit to the left as the interviewer fills in the

student data sheet. The information consists of the student's name, address, telephone, ethnic background, gender, and at least one goal that the student is seeking to achieve. In addition, the interviewer records the marital status, ages of children, if any, the level of education attained and the reason for dropping out, if applicable. The final data before assessment consists of the days and times that the student is available for tutoring.

Assessment, an initial evaluation of the learner's literacy-related strengths, weaknesses, goals, and interests, is a crucial step. DALC believes that most of its potential students are test-shy because of past failures and seeks to provide a minimal, though sufficient, assessment. The Slosson Word Recognition Test is used for basic screening and, if more information is needed, a potential learner is administered an Informal Reading Inventory.

While the results are tabulated, the learner is given a suggested topic and asked to write a paragraph. If the student is unable to produce a writing sample, he/she is asked to write from dictation. If, again, no sample is produced, a sentence is written by the interviewer and the student is asked to copy. With the information gained from the intake data, the literacy assessment, and the writing sample, a recommendation is made to provide the tutor with some knowledge of the level of materials and techniques to use with the potential learner.

Several other factors are discussed at the initial interview. The student is informed that although the tutoring is free, there is a charge for the materials used. He/she is informed of how and

when contact will be made by the tutor and that together they will decide where and how often the tutoring will occur. Tutoring usually occurs in a public place, such as in an office, library, church, or school, at which tutors are encouraged to use private rooms. The suggested time for tutoring is one to two hours two times weekly.

The process of referral, telephone contact, initial interview, and the first tutoring session usually spans a period of several months and is dependent upon the availability of trained volunteer tutors.

After tutoring sessions begin, students, as well as tutors, are provided with continued support. A student group meets once monthly to explore goals, participate in group discussion and decision-making, and to provide peer support. In addition, a library is maintained with adult books at various reading levels for the students and resource and instructional materials for the tutors. A quarterly newsletter is also mailed to each student and tutor. Students are encouraged to submit their writing to be published in the newsletter, and tutors are requested to assist with the written articles and in reading the newsletter.

Tutor/Student Matching and Re-Matching

According to an LLA "Program Management Fact Sheet," matching is more than simply determining whether tutor and learner can be in the same place at the same time. It involves considering the

compatibility of the pair, the needs and interests of the learner, the strengths of the tutor, and other factors that will lead to success.

Student matches are usually assigned at the third session of a five-session workshop. Telephone contact between tutor and student is practiced in the form of role-playing, and many various scenarios are presented. Results are discussed in the fourth session. A place and date for the first tutor/student meeting is set. Tutors are encouraged to meet with their new learners before the final session, and the first tutoring sessions are analyzed and suggestions made.

Re-matching of tutors and students is frequently necessary. Tutors and students must sometimes drop out because of illness, moving, family crises, or changing employment hours. Less often, students or tutors may request a replacement.

Target Population of DALC Programs

Geographical Areas

Adult learners in DALC programs are from varied geographical locations in the City and surrounding areas. The highest percentage requesting help reside in the Southeast sector of the City, which is also labeled a high-crime, low-employment, low-income sector. The Northeast and Northwest sections provide approximately equal percentages, while the Southwest provides relatively few. A small percentage of learners come from areas surrounding the City.

Composition

(1) The majority of the adults in DALC'S programs are African American, which reflects the general population in Washington, D.C. A small percentage of Caucasian, Filipino, West Indian, and Africans are also present. Approximately 75 percent of the target population is employed, although in low-paying positions.

(2) Students with varying degrees of learning disabilities comprise 50 percent of the student population. Two percent of the students are physically handicapped.

(3) Ages range from 20 to 70 with almost half in the 30 to 39 age group. One-quarter of the new learners dropped out of school between the seventh and eleventh grades, with about one-tenth having completed high school. Of the new learners, approximately 60 percent attended school in the District of Columbia, while about 30 percent attended school in Southern States.

There are equal numbers of male and female students.

Size of Target Population

DALC has matched and re-matched 250 tutor/student pairs. At the end of FY 1994 approximately 89 tutors and students were actively engaged. Five percent of the missing students attained a GED or moved on to higher education. A large percentage achieved at least one goal and dropped out after one or two years in the program, which is the average length of retention.

Collaboration With Other Literacy Service-providers

Linkages With Other Agencies, Including Churches

Since its inception, Delta Adult Literacy Council has sought to operate within the framework of existing community agencies. The Council has been co-sponsored by Metropolitan Baptist Church which is located in the heart of the Shaw District of Washington, D.C., a community of primarily African American, low-income residents. The Church consists of a population which includes many professional and highly visible members of the Washington, D.C., area and has adopted various ministries which provide social services to the surrounding neighborhood. The pastor, Dr. H. Beecher Hicks, Jr., and the Church leaders have been very supportive of the Literacy Council: Space has been provided for an office, for training, and for tutoring. Many of the Church members have served as volunteer tutors and in other volunteer capacities. Dr. Hicks is an honorary member of the Board of Directors, and his wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Hicks, serves on the Board of Directors.

The Council has trained tutors for several other churches throughout the City and assisted these churches in implementing tutorial programs. One of these churches established a tutorial and counseling program under the Court with young adult prisoners in a halfway house. Other churches have elected to tutor adult, low-level readers in their congregations or neighborhoods.

Another avenue of partnership with community agencies is through providing tutors to existing programs in other nonprofit agencies. Tutors have been trained and placed in substance abuse

rehabilitation centers, in a Youth Services facility, and in homeless shelters. In one such agency, the Council has provided consultation and resources to establish a GED program in addition to providing tutors for lower-level readers. The Council has also provided assessment and matching of tutors with students.

The Council has collaborated with Neighborhood Health Clinics to develop a Family Literacy program. The goal of this program has been to promote literacy of teen parents and their young children. Social workers at the clinics used "Shared Beginnings", a guide and idea book developed by Reading Is Fundamental (RIF), Inc., to encourage teen parents to read to their babies and nurture in their children a love for books and reading from their earliest years. This program was piloted as a cooperative venture between Delta Adult Literacy Council and RIF, Inc., with funding from several corporations, including the Southland Corporation. A major component of this program has been to distribute books to the parents and to enroll them in a library program.

The program sought to help young parents in the following ways:

- Understand the importance of reading to their children at a very young age
- Understand how other activities -- talking, singing, playing, going places, and telling stories -- lead to reading and prepare children for school
- Create an environment for learning at home

- Discover that reading can be a comforting activity -- another way to keep a young child happy
- Rediscover the pleasures of reading through the joy that reading aloud brings to their babies.

City-wide Literacy Programs

Delta Adult Literacy Council networks with other literacy service agencies throughout the City to provide more comprehensive services. An umbrella group operating from the Martin Luther King Public Library, the D.C. Adult Literacy Network, is made up of over 30 literacy service-providing agencies in the District. The Network's quarterly meetings are open to the public.

The Network has an Action Committee and a Resource Committee. The Action Committee is an advocacy group. It promotes issues such as plair language writing by public information groups and fair GED testing practices. The Resource Committee develops and distributes special teaching, reading, and training materials. It also arranges for special services for adult learners such as free vision screening and voting machine demonstrations. The Network periodically has held literacy conferences and assists with the National Adult Literacy Congress, which is a national meeting of adult new learners. The Network publishes bimonthly the "D.C. Adult Literacy Newsletter," which features literacy service-providers, profiles adult learners, provides national literacy news, teaching tips, reviews of new materials, and upcoming events.

The Network has been instrumental in establishing a Literacy Helpline which refers students and tutors to service-providers. A Regional Literacy Directory is also published and updated annually, and provides information about all known literacy programs in Washington, D.C., Northern Virginia, and Suburban Maryland.

The D.C. Literacy Resource Center was established as a result of the National Literacy Act of 1991. The Center is a joint project of the Adult Basic Education section of the D.C Public Library and Howard University School of Continuing Education. The D.C. Literacy Resource Center has published a list of available materials, including books, audio cassettes, and videotapes. The Center also has conducted a series of professional workshops for literacy service-providers.

The Council networks with literacy service-providers in the City. Areas of networking include referral, joint recruitment and fundraising, and sharing of resources and materials.

State Advisory Council on Literacy and Adult Education

A provision of the National Literacy Act of 1991 (P.L. 102-73) requires that a State may designate a body to act as a State Advisory Council on Adult Education and Literacy, appointed by and responsible to the Governor, or in the case of the District of Columbia, the Mayor. The Executive Director of DALC is a member of this Advisory Council. The duties of the Advisory Council are to advise the State Education Agency on the development of a State plan for literacy and adult education that fulfills the needs of the State, especially with respect to the needs of the labor

market, economic development goals, and the needs of individuals. In addition, the Advisory Council seeks to develop and implement measurable literacy goals and the improvement of the quality of literacy services. The Advisory Council meets at least four times each year.

Barriers to Providing Services and Reaching Users

Funding

In Washington, D.C., there are many literacy and adult education service-providers, including the Adult Basic Education Department of the D.C. Public Schools, who compete for a limited amount of funding. Part B, Subpart 1. Section 322 (a) (1), of the Adult Education Act, as amended by the National Literacy Act of 1991 (P.L. 102-73), requires that local educational agencies, public or private nonprofit, community-based organizations and institutions which serve educationally disadvantaged adults will be included and have direct and equitable access to all Federal funds provided.

Two years, numerous meetings, telephone calls and letters, testimony before City Council members, and unlimited persistence were required before a Request for Proposal was published by the State Office and disseminated to local agencies. Prior to that time, all funding from the State office was used by the D.C. Public Schools, Adult Basic Education Branch. A special problem exists in the District of Columbia, as it is not a State, and the State Education Agency is a department of the D.C. Public Schools system.

After submission of a proposal in 1993, DALC was one of six community organizations to receive State Education Agency funding. Although the funding is essential to the success of the program, the application and reporting process is extremely time-consuming, requiring monthly, quarterly, and yearly reports. Because of the competitive nature of the grant, there is no assurance of any funding, and the amount granted has not been the amount requested.

Therefore, even though a major amount of time is spent in applying for corporation/foundation grants and in other fundraising activities and events, DALC finds that funding is not adequate for staff, equipment, and materials. Furthermore, the time spent in fundraising activities prevents the staff from spending most of its time teaching and delivering services to economically and educationally disadvantaged adult readers.

In addition, funding is also needed to provide scholarships for volunteers who are unable to pay the registration fee for instructional materials used in tutor-training classes.

Recruitment and Retention

Statistics from D.C. Government Indices (1988) and the D.C. Public Schools' 4-year State Plan for Adult Education (1990-1993) (see Appendix A), relate that less than 10 percent of the population in the District, as Nationwide, are presently being served in adult education and literacy programs. A problem facing providers is how to identify and recruit the missing 90 percent and how to reduce the now existing 70 percent of adults who leave programs within one year. Some factors which have been identified

by researchers and practitioners which indicate why adults participate in adult literacy or basic education programs include educational advancement, self-improvement, economic need, job advancement, and family responsibilities. Reasons why they do not participate include low perception of need, situational barriers, and dislike of school. Many of the adults who do participate have short term goals such as obtaining a driver's license or filling out a job application, rather than perceiving the development of literacy skills as a lifelong process.

Technology

The use of technology in literacy programs remains an unfulfilled dream. There is a lack of funding both to purchase computers and to create or to purchase cost-effective software. (Wagner, 1993)

Lack of Convenience

There are many factors that influence the success of literacy programs. Although volunteers contribute many hours, their volunteer commitment is uncertain. Sites for individual tutoring and small group instruction become more of a problem as enrollment increases. Additional problems are transportation and child and elder care, particularly during late evening, after the normal workday.

Evaluation of Literacy Council Services

Because of the fragmentation of services in Washington, D.C., evaluation of literacy and adult education services is in the early stages of implementation. After a painful process, Quality

Indicators (see Appendix B) were developed and disseminated in 1993 as required by the National Literacy Act of 1991. Many literacy programs have never heard of the Quality Indicators, and no structure is in place for evaluation.

Factors Essential for a More Effective Program

Coordinated Delivery System

Each existing adult, continuing, and community school and literacy service-provider should be a component of a comprehensive system for the delivery of literacy and adult basic education (Reisner, 1993). Coordination of this effort must extend to the operational level of the agencies and organizations involved to reduce duplication of service and territorial issues. At present, all of the adult education programs in the City are reaching less than 10 percent of the City's more than 100,000 low literate or out-of-school youth and adults (see Appendix A). A comprehensive strategy is needed to increase the percentage served.

With the passage of the Adult Education Act of 1966, a meaningful Federal financial presence was established in addressing the problem of adult illiteracy. Since that time the public schools have assumed a major role in improving adult basic education. To increase literacy services and those served, the public schools must sharpen their focus and include establishment of family literacy programs to ensure that all parents become at least functionally literate. Schools can also provide space and teachers and assist with recruitment and public awareness.

As the workplace becomes more technologically advanced, the literacy requirements of the job marketplace continue to climb. Therefore, the private sector must become more involved as a major component of a comprehensive literacy thrust. Businesses and corporations, as well as government agencies, can establish workplace literacy centers, provide funding and volunteers, and give release time to employees who wish to be trained and serve as literacy teachers/tutors.

In "The Handbook of Adult Literacy Issues for Community Members" (1994), a recommendation is made that the literacy field must have the cooperative support of other institutions in the community that are committed to the development of human potential and social justice. Specifically, schools, churches, synagogues, human service agencies, fraternal organizations, private nonprofit groups, and Community Based Organizations have the internal structure to provide assistance with space, travel, recruitment, volunteers, and public relations.

A well publicized media-inciting event or series of events should be held to promote literacy needs on the local level as well as in the workplace, classroom, and university. The media must be instrumental in providing informational and recruitment services to raise awareness among the general public and various major community sectors as to the dimensions of the literacy crises in Washington, D.C. There is a need for a comprehensive and coordinated City-wide literacy campaign. Such a campaign was held in Baltimore at the outset of its literacy initiative. Mayor

Schmoke, founder of "Baltimore Reads," and many high visibility Baltimoreans and the general public were most conspicuous during the opening event, which was a month-long Read-A-thon.

Political Advocacy and Support

Literacy education has historically led to political activity. Arlene Fingeret (1991), a literacy advocate, cites how she first became involved in adult literacy by teaching a group of women in a housing development how to write letters to government officials to complain about housing and how to do research on the housing laws. Ms. Fingeret believes that the Federal policy question should be "How can literacy development support communities in addressing their issues?" Or, "How does change happen?"

Central Recruitment, Assessment, and Support

Recruitment and assessment should be coordinated Citywide and be based upon current research. Coordination of assessment should address the needs of individuals and families to prepare them for work, citizenship, and/or home management. The needs of the handicapped and the elderly should likewise be determined, and a City-wide referral system should be established. Once an individual or family enters the system, they should be followed through various service-providers until their needs are met.

A recent study concluded "that a single reading score is inadequate for measuring student progress in adult literacy programs and that grade equivalents are unreliable for estimating gain over time when fewer than 200 scores are aggregated" (Venezky, 1994). The most commonly used adult literacy test (TABE) was found

to be unreliable, and a functional literacy test (TALS) proved to be more reliable, though not completely adequate. The findings of this research suggest the need to construct a multiple indicator system for evaluating adult literacy constituents. Portfolio assessment is one option suggested by Reif (1995). The portfolio is a collection of materials that may include written pieces, visual representation, lists, tapes, and/or pictures.

Integration of Literacy Training and Human Services

Services must be structured to serve a highly disadvantaged population with literacy as a central concern. Reisner (1993) states that social issues such as racism, sexism, class inequality, and poverty must be incorporated into the services. Research demonstrates that skills training, employment preparation, and the development of parenting and child development skills can contribute to "(1) increased understanding of literacy issues among human service providers, (2) informal literacy training in many service contexts, (3) new opportunities to ground literacy instruction in real life applications, and (4) improvements in the capacity of human service agencies to serve persons who have previously failed to achieve literacy goals." (Reisner, 1993, p.7)

Every effort should be made to provide centralized and convenient sites which are open to the public on a full-time basis. All services should be accessible from these central sites. Transportation, as well as child and elder care, must be available.

Increased Funding

Increased funding is necessary if any progress is to be gained in raising the literacy levels of the American population. Increased enrollment should be a goal of all literacy programs. There is an impact on funding when the number of adults who enroll in adult literacy programs increase as they did between 1980 and 1992, during which time they nearly doubled from 2 million to over 3.8 million. (Handbook of Adult Literacy Issues for Community Members, 1994)

In order to provide quality services, programs must undergo staff development (Pates, Andrew, Fingeret, 1994), order new materials, provide computer training, and recruit and support additional students. (Handbook of Adult Literacy Issues for Community Members, 1994)

Many literacy organizations within the City are competing for the same funding from Federal and State agencies, from United Way, and from corporations and foundations. Funding must become more accessible, less time-consuming, and more responsive to the needs of each agency.

Interaction with the Public Library System

The Public Library System has a long history of service to literacy and lifelong learning (McCook, 1992). The District of Columbia Public Library has a large Adult Basic Education Collection including easy to read books for adults and literacy teaching materials. The Collection also has teacher-training

videos and other resources available for public use. In addition, the Library's Adult Learning Center provides tutoring space.

Mentioned earlier were the D.C Adult Literacy Network and the ESL Network, which are examples of collaboration and coalition-building sponsored by the Library. As a result of this network, a Literacy Helpline and a referral system have been established for volunteer tutors and students. In addition, a Regional Directory of service-providers has been published and is updated annually.

The D.C. Literacy Resource Center, in addition to housing literacy materials, has sponsored a series of professional staff development workshops for administrators, teachers, and tutors. The workshops spanned such issues as assessment, cultural diversity, learning disabilities, multilevel teaching, the use of computers, and how to teach basic math skills.

To further explore how computers can best be used in literacy instruction, the D.C. Public Library has set up an adult literacy computer lab, CALICO DC, at the main library. The lab will give literacy students and literacy-providers in the Greater Metropolitan Washington area a chance to "test-drive" educational software in a non-sales setting. Literacy-providers who are interested in incorporating technology into their instruction can use the MLK lab to make informed decisions about what technology they want to acquire. Service-providers may make appointments to visit the lab with small groups of adult learners. The lab will be staffed with a full-time adult learner and will be affiliated with

a national organization, "Play to Win," that is supporting "community access in computing" in cities around the country.

One of the most successful programs launched by the ABE Office is the adult new readers' book discussion group, "A Feel for Books." This program brings new readers together to discuss books and stories on a deeper level. The groups meet monthly and have helped a number of students to experience the joy of reading as well as to develop more confidence and trust in their new reading skills.

The Role of a Federal Research Agency

Data Collection Needed

Federal research agencies such as the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) have made considerable contributions to the field of adult literacy. Additional information which would be of importance to literacy programs includes research in the following areas:

- How to target, recruit, and retain participants
- How to provide continued and updated staff training and development
- Developing a model for planning, implementing, and funding comprehensive literacy centers which provide integrated services, as described in Section VI
- The effects of language, vision, and hearing disabilities on literacy attainment

- Nationwide program successes
- Involvement of community institutions and the private sector
- Assessment and evaluation of students and programs
- How to develop a stronger political voice

Anticipated Problems

Because of the nature of adult learning, particularly at the lower level, research teams and program administrators experience difficulty in collecting statistical data. As portfolio and other types of alternative assessment become more widespread in use, this problem will increase.

There is great concern throughout the Nation because of the changes in economic and social conditions associated with the "Contract with America." Education, in general, and particularly adult education, is already feeling the heavy hand of recision. Now, more than ever, a strong voice is needed to establish adult literacy as a priority and to convince law-makers that an increase of focus on adult learning will have far-reaching gains for families and children.

A third problem exists in adult literacy because there is no legal requirement that adults must be literate. Goal 5 of America 2000, a series of six national educational goals published by the Nation's Governors in 1990, states that by the year 2000 every adult American will be literate (see Appendix C). This goal was established as a response to what some perceived as a crisis in our society. The implications for OERI of the non-mandated nature of

adult literacy is that research must be geared towards determining the effects of illiteracy in a technological world and a global economy. This may lead to a requirement that adults become at least functionally literate.

Overcoming Barriers

As the knowledge gained from research becomes more available to the literacy service community and to the general public and community institutions, the private sector and local, as well as State and Federal government sectors, will have to provide increased support to the field of literacy (Frey, Gilliam, 1993). Adult educators must assume responsibility for providing research information to National, State, and local governments to insure that adult literacy becomes a priority and that the Nation moves toward the realization of National Education Goal 5. This would naturally require that funds be made available for this purpose. OERI may want to consider providing research to encourage local and State educational agencies to make literacy a responsibility. This would open the door for community institutions to promote adult literacy, including family literacy and literacy for the unemployed and unemployable.

Dissemination of Information

Public and private radio, TV, and talk shows must become more active in promoting public awareness of literacy needs and successes.

Public libraries can become more involved by bombarding the public with community displays which depict the benefits and enrollment process to acquire literacy and lifelong learning.

Informational tapes and compact discs are very motivational avenues to capture the interest of the target population.

Finally, literacy must join the super highway, for electronic networks remove the isolation and stigma of low literacy as adults share information and experiences in computer-based group discussions. Distance-learning systems also bring the best teachers from around the country to the most remote learners.

As the need arises, software and hardware development will become priorities, and the potential for the use of technology to benefit adult literacy will be tapped.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A	-	Some Statistics on Literacy Needs in D.C.
Appendix B	-	Quality Indicators for Adult Education Programs - District of Columbia Public Schools State Office 1993-1994
Appendix C	-	National Education Goals

Some Statistics on Literacy Needs in D.C.

As far back as 1978, the Metropolitan Board of Trade and the National Alliance of Business conducted a survey of employers in the Washington metropolitan area, and found that 26% of the employers surveyed listed a lack of basic skills as a common deficiency among applicants for entry level and low skill job openings. Since that time, additional studies have shown that for those students who do learn the basic skills in school, the gap between the skills learned in school and those needed in the workplace has widened, and that even the high school graduates from the city's schools have made only marginal gains in acquiring higher level literacy skills.

Other factors employers have to consider are the following:

- 130,000 or 26% of D.C.'s adult population over the age of 25 have less than a high school education; half of whom have not gone beyond 8th grade.
- 25,500 youths/adults between the ages of 18 and 24 have not completed high school; only 10% of whom are estimated to be enrolled in any adult education program.
- 30,000 of the above populations are young mothers on public assistance, for whom the welfare department has a mandate from the federal government to place in jobs or job training.
- The dropout rate in the city's schools borders on 40-50%; the federal government has estimated the figure to be at or above 60%.
- The dropout rate from adult education and literacy programs, with few exceptions, borders on 60-70% the first year of study; not unlike the national average.
- At least 25% of more than 3,000 adult learners who've been at one of D.C.'s oldest community based literacy programs for literacy training are high school graduates who are reading below the fourth grade reading level.

(Sources: D.C. Government Indices, 1988; D.C. Public Schools, Four-Year State Plan for Adult Education, 1990-1993; Greater Washington Research Center studies and reports on *Strategies for Reducing Chronic Poverty*, 1989.)

QUALITY INDICATORS

FOR

ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

1993-94

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
STATE OFFICE

Appendix C

The National Education Goals

Goal 1

By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.

Goal 2

By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.

Goal 3

By the year 2000, American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so that they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.

Goal 4

By the year 2000, U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.

Goal 5

By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Goal 6

By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.